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General Assembly

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Human Rights Council
Thirty-eighth session
18 June–6 July 2018
Agenda item 4
Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Note verbale dated 11 June 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and kindly requests the Office of the High Commissioner to circulate the comment by the Department of Information and Public Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh (Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh) on the anniversary of the massacre in Maragha (see annex),* a village in Nagorno-Karabakh, which is currently under the occupation of the armed forces of Azerbaijan, as a document of the thirty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council, under agenda item 4.

* Reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.

GE.18-12142(E)
1812142

Please recycle

Annex to the note verbale dated 11 June 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Comment by the Department of Information and Public Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh

The massacre of the inhabitants of the village of Maragha of the Artsakh Republic's Martakert region, committed by the Azerbaijani army on April 10, 1992, is one of the most tragic episodes of Azerbaijan's military aggression against Artsakh.

After intensive artillery shelling, the Azerbaijani troops invaded the village of Maragha, where 118 people remained, mostly the elderly, disabled, women, and children. As a result of the war crime committed with unprecedented cruelty by the Azerbaijani armed forces, over 50 people were killed and the rest, including 9 children and 29 women, were taken hostage. Some of them were later returned, but the fate of 19 hostages remains unknown to this day.

The village was liberated by the armed forces of Artsakh, however two weeks later, it was again attacked, and those who had returned to bury their relatives became victims of the new atrocities of the Azerbaijani army.

The attack on the village was not conditioned by a military necessity, but was primarily aimed at exterminating its peaceful civilian population. The crime in Maragha became the continuation of the series of pogroms and deportations of Armenians in Sumgait, Baku, Kirovabad and other settlements of Azerbaijan, as well as in the villages of Northern Artsakh in 1988–1991. These were intended to strangle at its birth the national-liberation struggle of the Armenians of Artsakh and deprive them of the homeland through ethnic cleansing and terror against Artsakh and the Armenian population of Azerbaijan.

The impunity of the organizers and perpetrators of these crimes created a fertile ground in Azerbaijan for enrooting the cult of hatred towards Armenians as a state policy and unbridled a propaganda of xenophobia, intolerance, and militarism. Azerbaijan's aggression against Artsakh in April 2016, which was accompanied by war crimes against civilians and soldiers of the Artsakh Defense Army, demonstrated that the methods and approaches of the Azerbaijani side remained unchanged.

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Human Rights Council
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Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Note verbale dated 2 July 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and has the honour to provide herewith the comments of the Government of Greece in relation to the written statement submitted by the "Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe", a non-governmental organization in special consultative status (A/HRC/38/NGO/68) (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Greece kindly requests the Office of the High Commissioner to circulate the present note verbale and the text attached* as a document of the thirty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council under agenda item 3.

* Reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.

GE.18-12143(E)
1812143

Please recycle

Annex to the note verbale dated 2 July 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Greece at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Comments of the Government of Greece in relation to the written statement submitted by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (A/HRC/38/NGO/68)

At the outset, we would like to stress that we regret once again witnessing a Government Organized NGO following an intentionally misleading strategy within the Human Rights Council, hoping to gain from unsubstantiated accusations.

We deplore having to reply to the written statement by the "NGO" "FWTTE" for two reasons: First, its authors refer to issues already addressed over a year ago, during the 34th session of the Human Rights Council, and second, the statement twists into accusations of Human Rights violations cases where the law was applied without any discrimination, as well as other ones that were dismissed before going to trial.

The statement refers to a criminal complaint filed by the political party "Golden Dawn" in July 2016, asking that the march organized by the "Friendship, Equality and Peace" (F.E.P.) party be prohibited. This complaint was dismissed by the competent Prosecutor and filed without proceedings. The mention of this case is clearly aiming to create a false impression regarding the Greek judicial system. Regarding the deposition of the same party's president in October 2016, the FEP President was called by the Prosecutor to provide substantiated evidence backing up his statement accusing Greece of having murdered the late minority politician, Sadik Ahmet.

These events can under no circumstances be qualified as a "policy of intimidation of the minority", as the statement of the NGO is claiming.

With regard to the Mayor of Iasmos, as we already stated in 2017, media reports confirmed that he was repeatedly using the official vehicle of the municipality for private purposes, something prohibited by law. He was arrested following complaints made by citizens. Once again, this is not a case of political intimidation of a minority representative, as falsely claimed in the statement, but just the implementation of legal provisions with regard to the use of publicly funded means of transport for private purposes.

Concerning the case of Mr Ahmet Mete, the Public Prosecutor brought charges against him following a statement inciting to sedition. Specifically, Mr Mete expressed the wish that the President of the F.E.P. party become the "Rauf Denktash of Thrace". Rauf Denktash was a Cypriot politician, who in 1983 proceeded to the unlawful act of unilateral proclamation of a secessionist state in the northern part of Cyprus, an act that has been categorically condemned by the United Nations Security Council in successive resolutions. Thus, Mr Ahmet Mete has been prosecuted and he will stand trial later this month, for inviting a Greek politician to proceed to the secession of part of the Greek territory.

Furthermore, with regard to Mr Ibrahim Serif, he proceeded to a mass circumcision ceremony without having any license or authorization to perform these surgical operations. It goes without saying that neither Greece nor any other country in the world would jeopardize the health of its youth by allowing unauthorized persons to proceed to assist on public surgical operations.

Finally, regarding Mr Koray Hasan, he held renovation works in a building without having the administrative authorization to proceed accordingly.

In conclusion, we would like to remind the NGO that Greece fully upholds the minority rights of the Muslim minority of Thrace as they are provided for in the Lausanne Peace Treaty, including their religious rights and their freedom of expression.

United Nations A/HRC/38/G/6

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Human Rights Council
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18 June–6 July 2018
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Note verbale dated 29 June 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Belarus to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other international organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council, and has the honour to enclose an aide-mémoire submitted by Belarus regarding its latest human rights records (see annex). The Permanent Mission requests that the annex* be published as a document of the thirty-eighth session of the Council under agenda item 3 in all official languages of the United Nations.

* Reproduced as received.

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1816855

Please recycle

Annex to the note verbale dated 29 June 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Belarus to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council

Aide-mémoire: Belarus: latest human rights records

International stand

According to the latest 2016 Human Development Report of the UN Development Programme Belarus ranks 52nd in the Human Development Index and is among top countries with high human development.

Belarus reached ahead of schedule the Millennium Development Goals related to primary education, gender equality, the eradication of poverty and hunger, reducing child and maternal mortality.

National Human Rights Action Plan

Belarus has a necessary national platform for the promotion and protection of human rights, which includes legislative and institutional frameworks.

Belarus is one of the few countries that adopted National Human Rights Action Plans (NHRAP).

The Belarusian NHRAP was approved by the Government in late October 2016 and is a comprehensive one. It includes 100 measures aimed at promoting the implementation of the State's international obligations in the field of human rights including, inter alia, through the effective realization of UPR recommendations, human rights treaty bodies' recommendations as well as initiative steps identified as national priority.

While drafting around 40 national NGOs and the UN agencies in Belarus had an opportunity to communicate their proposals to the plan.

The implementation of NHRAP is monitored by the Government on an annual basis. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates the implementation and reporting processes. For the past period two reports were prepared to the Government and a number of results were publicly discussed.

The UN agencies, civil society organizations and other stakeholders were invited to participate in the implementation of NHRAP.

Among the key results of the NHRAP's implementation are the following:

- Accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and adoption of the National action plan for the implementation of this Convention,
- Submission and presentation of all necessary periodic reports to the human rights treaty bodies, including on the implementation of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
- Consideration of the State's periodic reports in a public and transparent manner,
- Encouragement of broader participation of civil society representatives in human rights events organized by State authorities,
- Promotion of public discussions of international trends in application of the death penalty.

Belarus is involved in realization of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) as well as UNICEF and UNFPA country programmes, which contain human rights components, and actively cooperates with the UN agencies and other partners to effectively implement them.

Moreover, events dedicated to different significant human rights days, including Zero Discrimination Day, International Children's Day, are held annually with the support of the authorities.

Reporting to the human rights treaty bodies

Belarus is a party to almost all core international human rights treaties and seeks to report regularly to the treaty bodies.

Since 2016 to this day Belarus has held dialogues with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Committee against Torture (CAT) while presenting its reports.

The fifth periodic report to the Human Rights Committee is to be considered at its session this November.

The Belarusian reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are awaiting consideration.

Cooperation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Belarus is eager to develop a constrictive and result-oriented cooperation with OHCHR.

In 2016 Belarus officially invited the High Commissioner to pay a visit to the country.

For a long time, Belarus and OHCHR fruitfully cooperated on the issue of combating human trafficking through a human rights-centred approach. A number of international technical assistance projects were successfully implemented in this area, including training courses for law enforcement officials from Belarus and other countries.

Belarus also invited the Office to support the implementation of NHRAP. Last October a needs-assessment mission of OHCHR visited Minsk. The OHCHR experts met with representatives of Belarusian line ministries and discussed the prospects of cooperation. As a result of the mission, a number of specific areas were agreed for possible technical support.

For example, in September this year a training course for State authorities on the topic of reporting to treaty bodies is planned to be organized by the Office.

Belarus has also accepted the nomination of a human rights adviser in the UN Office in Minsk with a view to facilitating the implementation of NHRAP.

Cooperation with the Human Rights Council's mechanisms

In May 2015 Belarus reported to the Council under the second cycle of UPR and as a result accepted most recommendations made by Member States. In December 2015 Minsk hosted the International seminar "Implementation of Universal Periodic Review results: consideration of a coordinated approach" organized jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UN Office in Minsk and supported by OHCHR.

Belarus issued a standing invitation to nine thematic special procedures of the Human Rights Council.

Belarus regularly provides special procedures with the information upon their requests.

Although Belarus continues not to recognize the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus, Mr. Miklós Haraszti as an exception was allowed to visit Belarus last year (not in his official capacity) in the framework of the annual OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Session in Minsk on 5 July.

Engagement with civil socicty

The Government is engaged in dialogue with civil society on different topics of human rights agenda.

On 12 May 2017 the Ministry of Justice of Belarus registered "Tell the Truth" public association.

In May 2016, December 2017 and April 2018 expert consultations between State bodies and civil society organizations were held in Minsk on civil and political rights issues as well as prevention of torture. They were initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with UN Office in Minsk and NGOs in the context of implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan.

These consultations were attended by representatives and experts of around 40 national NGOs representing the whole spectrum of views in the country.

Moreover, NGOs are traditional participants of numerous other thematic annual national and international events.

The practice of such exchange of views on human rights agenda is going to be continued

Bilateral human rights dialogues

Belarus is increasingly open and engaged with the EU and the US on human rights issues. Since 2015 the country has conducted annual bilateral human rights dialogues with the US and the EU.

Human rights are also a standing item on the agenda of the Belarus-EU Coordination Group that meets twice a year. Civil society organizations are invited by the authorities on a regular basis to contribute to the Coordination Group and Belarus-EU human rights dialogue activities.